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Iran-Iraq War Would Not Have Occurred if Carter Had Aided Shah, Reagan Says

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EL PASO—Ronald Reagan termed the Iran-Iraq war a "tragic situation" Wednesday and said it would not have occurred if President Carter had supported the late Shah of Iran against the Muslim revolutionaries.

When asked by an interviewer what he would do about the war now, the Republican presidential candidate said he did not know for sure but would not make his plan public if he did have one.

"You don't tell the other fellow in advance what you can or cannot do," he said.

Reagan talked about the Middle East flare-up on a day of campaigning across Texas, during which he hammered at Carter's energy program as an abject failure.

Linchpin of Stability

Iran was "literally the linchpin in holding stability there in the Middle East" under the late Shah, Reagan said, "and this Administration must take responsibility for letting the breakup of Iran occur."

When asked if he was blaming Carter for what has happened, Reagan replied, "Well, it's his foreign policy. And I think he acknowledged, back when the uprising occurred, and so forth, he acknowledged the strategic long-range importance of Iran to the whole Western world there in the Middle East.

"And (he) placed more emphasis on human rights or something, in the hands of the dissidents in that country."

As for Carter's announcement Wednesday that the United States would remain neutral in the Iran-Iraq dispute, Reagan said, "The

truth is, he (Carter) has no choice.

"He has allowed the defensive capabilities of the U.S. to become so weakened that it's like when he said that we would use force with regards to the Persian Gulf and, two weeks later, had to admit we don't have the force."

But Reagan added that he was not advocating the use of U.S. force now.

Only the day before, Carter, campaigning in Los Angeles, had accused Reagan of being too quick to suggest the use of U.S. military power in international crises.

Later, Reagan issued a brief statement to reporters, saying:

"The situation, involving Iran and Iraq, is both serious and unfortunate, not only because the American hostages are endangered but also because it could spread into a generalized war and because it threatens the world's oil supplies.

"What is happening in Iraq and Iran is the consequence of policies this Administration has followed during the last 3½ years—a vacillating foreign policy and a weakened defense capability are largely to blame.

"It is up to President Carter now to decide what role the U.S. must play, and I will make no further comments at this time."

Rejects Briefings by CIA

Regarding his knowledge of the Middle East situation, Reagan said during the interview that he had confidence in his own advisers and their sources of information and would continue to reject the regular briefings by the Central Intelligence Agency that the President had offered him.

Reagan's comments on the

Mideast conflict offered in an interview and made public by the Reagan staff, took attention away from his attacks on Carter's energy program.

In the East Texas oil field town of Tyler, the Republican presidential candidate heavily criticized Carter's policies on the deregulation of oil and gas production.

In seeking to get back on the offensive after spending the last two days responding to Carter charges, Reagan made a conscious effort to touch a nerve with oil-state Texans who narrowly went for Carter over then-President Gerald R. Ford four years ago.

Carter Policies Assailed

Accompanied by Texas Gov. William P. Clements and former Gov. John B. Connally, Reagan told a Tyler campaign rally that Carter's energy policies "have discouraged the discovery and production of energy in this country," and that "his misleading rhetoric and incomplete facts cannot stand up to the numbers presented in the government reports."

He quoted Department of Energy figures to support his charge that oil production in the United States has declined every year since Carter took office and that oil imports for the first half of this year were 6% higher than in 1976.

Reagan, who was chided by Carter earlier in the campaign as using unofficial or misleading figures, emphasized in Texas that his information came from a publication entitled "Energy Programs/Energy Markets," published by the Department of Energy in July of this year.

Reagan closed out his campaign day with a rally in Grand Junction, Colo., and a flight to San Francisco.